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THE Harmonious Consent OF THE MINISTERS OF THE *Province* within the *County Palatine* OF LANCASTER,

With their Reverend Brethren the Miniſters of the Province of London, in their late Teſtimonie to the Trueth of Jeſus Chriſt, and to our

Solemn League and Covenant:

As alſo againſt the Errours, Hereſies, and Blaſphemies of theſe times, and the Toleration of them.

LONDON,

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THE

Harmonious Conſent

OF THE

Miniſters of the Province

WITHIN THE

County Palatine of Lancaſter, &c.

IT is a ſaying of *Solomon* worthy to be writen in letters of gold *That a friend loveth at all times, and a brother is born for adverſity* [a]: And therefore though God need not the witneſs of men, nor truth our teſtimony, yet when his name is blaſphemed, the truth contradicted and oppoſed; the faithful friends of God, and the ſincere lovers of the truth, will (as in all ages they have done) ſtand up in his cauſe, which they then ſee in ſuch apparant hazard. In the Scriptures we read of *a cloud of witneſſes* [b] that appeared for God, and bare witneſs to his truth, though for ſo doing ſome of them had *tryal of cruel mockings and ſcourgings, yea moreover of bonds and impriſonments* [c], *&c.* In the Apoſtaſie of the ten tribes *Elijah* and *Eliſha* were zealous for God againſt the falſe Prophets of *Baal*. *Jeremy* at *Jeruſalem*, and *Ezekiel* in Captivity bore witneſs againſt the whoredoms of the houſe of *Judah*, as is moſt evident throughout their whole Prophefies. *Peter* and the other Apoſtles, though commanded not to teach any more in the name of Chriſt, yet did not therefore forbear, reſolving *rather to obey God then men* [d]. The two witneſſes prophefied one thouſand two hundred threeſcore days,

a Prov. 17. 17

b Heb. 12. 1.

c Heb. 11. 36, 37, 38.

d Acts 5. 28.

all the while the Gentiles did tread under-foot the holy City [e]. *Arrius* met with great *Athanasius*, and when the whole world wondered at it self that it was become *Arrian*, the general Councel of *Nice* [f] met and laid an *anathema* on that pernicious Heresie. In latter times God had many in this Land, *who loved not their lives unto the death* [g], and gave testimony to the truth, not in ink but in blood, and who (though they *be dead*) *yet speak* [h], as their names wil live for ever. When the Complices of *Arminius* grew many, some from the several reformed Churches convened in the general Synod of *Dort*, and accursed his pestilentious Errours. And yet more lately, *The* [i] *designs of Priests and Jesuites, and other adherents to the Sea of Rome against the true reformed Protestant Religion in his Majesties Dominions established, the introducing of divers innovations and superstitions into the Church, together with the driving out of multitudes out of his Majesties Dominions*, amongst other reasons brought forth the Protestation, for the defence, as of other things, so also of *the true reformed Protestant Religion expressed in the Doctrine of the Church of England, against all Popery and Popish innovations within this Realm*; wherein not only the Parliament it self was engaged, but according to the [k] Order and [l] Vote of the House of Commons, the generality of the Kingdom were engaged too. *The* [m] *calling to mind the treacherous and bloody plots, conspiracies, attempts and practises of the enemies of God against the true Religion and professors therof in all places, especially in these three Kingdoms ever since the Reformation of Religion, and how much their rage, power and presumption* had been *of late*, and were at that *time increased and exercised*, did *in a great tryal of affliction* [n], induce these Kingdoms to enter into a solemn League and Covenant, as for other things, so also for *the defence and Reformation of Religion and Extirpation of Popery, Prelacy, Superstition, Heresie, Schism, and Profanes, &c.* by which, *sc.* the Protestation and Covenant, as there

e Rev. 11. 2, 3.

f *Convenerant autem præter innumerabiles diaconos ac presbyteros episcopi numero trecenti et octodecem, viri & vitæ sanctitate & miraculis et divinarum scripturarum scientia plane admirabiles*, &c. Binnius vol. 1. Pag. 262

g Rev. 12. 11.

h Heb. 11. 4.

i See the Preface to the Protestation May 5. 1641.

k See the Order of the House of *Commons* May 5. 1641. concerning the printing of the Preamble & the Protestation, and sending down the Copies printed by the Knights and Burgesses, who were to intimate with what willingness all the Members of the House made the Protestation, and further to signifie, that as they justifie the taking of it in themselves, so they cannot but approve it in all such as shal take it.

l See the Vote of the House, *July* 30. 1641 wherein they declare, that what person soever shal not take the Protestation is unfit to bear Office in the Church or Common wealth.

m The Preface of the solemn League and Covenant, published *Sept.* 27. 1643.

n 2 Cor. 8. 2.

there was eare taken for the better defence of the truth, ſo there was alſo a glorious confeſſion of it made before God, Angels and men. And now when men of perverſe ſpirits and *corrupt minds, reprobate concerning the faith* had *reſiſted the truth* [o], this ſtirred up the zeal of our reverend and godly brethren, the Miniſters of the Province of *London*, to give teſtimony to the truth of Jeſus Chriſt.

o 2 Tim. 3. 8.

And therefore that we the Miniſters of Chriſt within the Province of the County of *Lancaſter*, may in ſomething fil up the meaſure of the teſtimony of them that have gone before us, conſidering that we cannot but be ſenſible of the ſtrange and woful Apoſtaſie of ſundry from the Faith; the great oppoſition made againſt the Government and Diſcipline of Jeſus Chriſt; the ſad Diviſions and Rents in this tattered and torn Church; that an univerſal Toleration of all, even the moſt execrable doctrines, that ever were hatcht in hel or broached in the world, is earneſtly labored after by many; and that the Solemn League and Covenant, ſworn with hands lifted up to the moſt high God, is with many buried in oblivion, as it is not only neglected and ſlighted, but alſo contemned, ſcorned, derided, and moſt palpably violated and trampled on by not a few; and that its manifeſt that God is hereby ſhamefully diſhonored, moſt highly provoked, neighbor Churches juſtly ſcandalized, all fundamental and ſaving truths in danger to be plucked up by the roots, and our ſeveral flocks to be poyſoned with the ſpreading Errors of the times.

The claim that is laid to truth by the three glorious perſons in the bleſſed Trinity [p]; the high price and account that is worthy to be ſet upon it, being to be bought [q] though at never ſo dear a rate (how ever now a days eſteemed of with many as a refuſe commodity); the high thankfulneſs we ow to God for keeping trueth ſo chaſte and pure ſo long under an adulterous Church Government; the truſt repoſed in us by Jeſus Chriſt as his meſſengers, embaſſadors and ſtewards of the myſteries of the Goſpel, of whom it is required that they ſhould be faithful [r]; the duty we ow to our ſeveral flocks as being watchmen [s] to give them warning, and that as ſtandard-bearers we may encourage them *earneſtly* [t] *to contend for the faith once delivered to the Saints*; the care over their immortal ſouls redeemed [u] *with the precious blood of Chriſt*; the conſcience of our Solemn League and Covenant, binding

p The Father is called *The God of truth*, Deut. 32. 4. the Son *the truth*, Jo 14 6 the holy Ghoſt *the Spirit of truth*, Jo. 14. 17

q Prov. 23 23.

r 1 Cor. 4. 1, 2

s Ezek. 33. 7, 8, 9, &c.

t Jude 3.

u 1 Pet. 1, 18, 19.

 ing

ing us in our places to endeavour the Reformation of Religion, and the Extirpation of the contrary; our fears leſt the Reformation ſo earneſtly longed for, ſo joyfully covenanted, ſo much ſuffered for, and of late times ſo much bled for, ſhould after ſo many ſharp throws, and ſuch hard labor, prove an abortive birth; the worthy, renowned and much encouraging example of our reverend brethren the Miniſters of the Province of *London* going before us (and whom to follow in witneſs bearing to the truth, and ſo far *as they follow Chriſt* [w], we count it but our duty;) The multitude of them that in theſe days do oppoſe the truth, by whoſe great numbers it is in danger to be born down, if contrary endevors to the utmoſt be not uſed by the united ſtrength of all that love it, to hold it up; and laſtly that we may waſh our hands from the guilt of betraying by our ſinful ſilence ſo precious a treaſure as truth is, and may not judg our poſterity unworthy thereof for our ſakes, if we ſhould not own it, plead for it, and hold it faſt: Theſe things we ſay, in this juncture of affairs, do draw us forth publikely to declare our ſelves in thoſe main things witneſſed to by our brethren in their late *Teſtimony to the Truth of Jeſus Chriſt, and to our Solemn League and Covenant; As alſo againſt the Errors, Hereſies, and Blaſphemies of theſe times, and the Toleration of them.*

[w] 1 Cor. 11. 1

I.

As touching the neceſſity of a platform of Doctrine or Confeſſion of Faith, we ſhal need to ſay nothing, it having been found ſo uſeful for the Church in all Ages, from the primitive times even until now, not only that the ignorant might thereby be informed concerning the main points needful to be known and beleeved by them unto ſalvation, but alſo for the better preſerving of the truth, detecting and diſcovery of Hereticks and Seducers, and to teſtifie conſent and agreement in that one Faith.

Here only we think it needful to declare, that we do highly approve of *the humble Advice of the* reverend and learned *Aſſembly of Divines concerning a Confeſſion of Faith*, judging it not only to be orthodox, ſound, ſolid, ſubſtantial, and pious, but alſo to be very ful, and in eſpecial manner uſeful for theſe times, as that which doth obviate thoſe many dangerous Errors that do ſwarm

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in this Age; and therefore as we do *aſſent unto the whole*, ſo we alſo do *concur with the reverend Aſſembly and our* [x] *reverend brethren, the Miniſters of the Province of London, in our humble and hearty deſires that it may receive the approbation and ſanction of authority, as the joynt Confeſſion of Faith for theſe three Kingdoms in purſuance of our Covenant.*

x See the Teſt. to the truth of *Jeſus Chriſt*, page 3.

II.

In the next place, we do hereby openly profeſs before God and the world, that we cannot but tremble and be amazed to conſider, that in a Land engaged in ſuch a Covenant; profeſſing ſo much for Reformation; made partakers of ſo many ſpecial mercies as *England* hath been; ſuch blaſphemous, execrable and horrid doctrines ſhould ever be publikely broached, printed, maintained and defended as are at theſe times. We ſhal not need to recite them particularly, becauſe that work is ſo fully done already to our hands by our brethren in their late Teſtimony [y]; although to the great grief and wounding of our hearts we may declare, that as they only there intended to give a *ſmal taſte of their wormwood and gal* [z], ſo we are aſſured their Catalogue of Errors might be much augmented, if there were any neceſſity to rake any further into the dunghil-books whence they might be gathered, and that many more authors might be quoted, to make it more fully evident; that there are indeed ſuch Errors and Hereſies amongſt us as are by them recited. But here we cannot but bluſh, wonder and be aſtoniſhed at our ſtrange revolt. We remember the times when under the Prelatical tyranny, Arminianiſm, Antinomianiſm, and the Innovations that were introduced into the worſhip of God, were generally cryed out againſt by all that party which was then eſteemed truly religious: but now, as though Errors and Hereſies had changed their natures, and were grown better becauſe the perſons profeſſing, patronizing and countenancing them in theſe days pretend to more piety and holineſs then was to be found in the Fautors of them heretofore, ſuch kind of Errors as would then have been abhorred by every one truly conſcientious: to the great diſhonor of God, ſcandal of Religion, and ſhame of our Church and Nation, do now take ſanctuary and ſhroud themſelves under the ſhadow of many of thoſe that challenge

y See the Catalogue of Errors in the Teſtimony to the *Truth of Jeſus Chriſt*, page 5, to 23.

z Ibid. *p* 23.

challenge to themſelves the name of the godly party.

And as we cannot but take notice of the juſt hand of God out againſt us in ſeting open the flood-gates to let in this ſea of Errour, wherewith this Church is in danger to be overflown, thereby to puniſh our former lukewarmneſs and coldneſs in defence of the truth, unprofitablenes under the means of grace, diſeſteem & ſlighting of the truth, *our not valuing as we ought the ineſtimable benefit of the Goſpel; our not labouring for the purity and power thereof, and not endevouring to receive Chriſt in our hearts, nor to walk worthy of him in our lives, which are the cauſes of other ſins and tranſgreſſions ſo much abounding amongſt us*; ſo we cannot but expreſs our deepeſt ſence hereof and ſorrow for the ſame; this alone being ſufficient to move us to roul our ſelves in the duſt, to rent our hearts and not our garments; as the Honorable Houſes of Parliament hereupon ſaw cauſe both for themſelves and the whole Kingdom to be humbled for the *growth of Errours, Hereſies and Blaſphemies* when they publiſhed their Ordinance [a] to that purpoſe: As alſo for to ſeek *Gods aſſiſtance for the ſuppreſſing and preventing the ſame*, and which put us in hopes that there would have been long before now an application of ſome effectual means of remedy. And although we cannot but from the bottom of our hearts lament, and pity all thoſe that are intangled in the dangerous and deadly ſnares of the Errours of theſe times, yet conſidering that unſound and heretical doctrine *wil eat as doth a canker* [b] or gangrene; and therefore doth manifeſtly tend to the razing down to the ground the true Chriſtian Faith, the extirpating of all true Religion and the power of godlineſs, the poyſoning and undoing of precious ſouls; is the peſt of a Church; the weed that wil over-grow Gods garden, and ſo choak the plants of the Lords own planting; doth highly provoke God to anger; and that the fuliginous vapors thereof which have of late riſen up out of the bottomleſs pit (as they have greatly eclipſed) ſo are they in danger to grow into thick clouds to the utter darkening of the heavens over our heads, that we

[a] See the Ordinance of the *Lords* and *Commons* aſſembled in Parliament concerning the growth and ſpreading of Errors, Hereſies and Blaſphemies, ſeting apart a day of publike Humiliation to ſeek Gods aſſiſtance for the ſuppreſſing and preventing the ſame, and which was ordered by the Lords to be printed *Die Jovis*, Feb. 4. 1646. and to be carryed down by the Sheriffs and under-Sheriffs, and delivered to the ſeveral Miniſters of every pariſh Church & Chappel within this Kingdom, who were required to take notice of the ſame.

[b] 2 Tim 2. 17.

we ſhould not behold any more the light of the glorious Goſpel of Jeſus Chriſt; we do therefore hereby teſtifie with our brethren [c] *to all our flocks, to all the Kingdom, to all the reformed Churches, as our great diſlike of Prelacy, Eraſtianiſm, Brownıſm and Independency; ſo our utter abhorrency of Antiſcripturiſm, Popery, Arianiſm, Socinianiſm, Arminianiſm, Antinomianiſm, Anabaptiſm, Libertiniſm, and Familiſm, with all ſuch like now too rife amongſt us*; and more particularly all thoſe Errours witneſſed againſt by our brethren, and recited by them in their Catalogue of infamous and pernicious Errours in their late Teſtimony.

[c] *Teſtimony to the Truth of Jeſus Chriſt*, page 33.

And we do hereby, as the Watchmen of God and Miniſters of Jeſus Chriſt, give warning to our ſeveral flocks, [d] *That they take heed of the wolves in ſheeps clothing, of all* [e] *falſe Teachers that do privily bring in damnable Hereſies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themſelves ſwift deſtruction, and that therefore they follow not their pernicious ways, that the way of truth may not be evil ſpoken of; that* [f] *if any man come unto them and bring not the doctrine of Chriſt, they receive him not into their houſe, neither bid him God ſpeed; that ſo they be not partakers of their evil deeds; that* [g] *they mark them which cauſe diviſions and offences, contrary to the doctrine which they have learned, and avoyd them:* And do earneſtly exhort them in the bowels of Jeſus Chriſt, *That they labour to get ſound knowledg, and to be wel grounded in the principles of the oracles of* [h] *God (the want whereof is the cauſe why ſo many are ſeduced and turned aſide; and being* [i] *but children in underſtanding are toſſed to and fro, and carryed about with every wind of doctrine by the ſleight of men and cuning craftineſs of thoſe that lie in wait to deceive)* [k] *that they ſearch the Scriptures with thoſe good Bereans whether thoſe things they hear be ſo or no;* [l] *that they beleeve not every ſpirit, but try the ſpirits whether they are of God, becauſe many falſe Prophets are gone out into the world;* [m] *that they deſpiſe not prophecying, but yet prove all things, and hold faſt that which is good;* [n] *and that ſpeaking the trueth in love, they grow up into Chriſt in all things which is the head:* Moſt humbly beſeeching [o] *the God of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt the Father of glory, that he would give unto all his people the Spirit of wiſdom and revelation in the knowledg*

[d] Mat. 7. 15.
[e] 2 Pet. 2. 1.
[f] 2 Ioh. v. 10, 11
[g] Rom. 16, 17
[h] Heb. 5. 12.
[i] Eph. 4. 14.
[k] Acts 17. 11.
[l] 1 Iohn 4. 1.
[m] 1 Theſ. 5. 20, 21
[n] Eph. 4. 15
[o] Eph. 1. 17

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of him: [p] That he would grant unto them according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man, that they may be kept from every evil way of errour and sin, and may always have something to say for the trueth, and nothing against it; that all those that go astray may be brought into the way of trueth; and that we our selves, our several flocks, and the whole Church of God every where may be found blameless at the day of Christ. And however we cannot but for the present deplore the sad condition of the Church of God in this Kingdom, in respect of the poysonful Errours it is infected with, yet we hope that that God which often works by contraries, making scandals the tryal and triumph of his chosen, is for the present doing his people good by the means of Errours growth, thereby trying their sincerity and love to trueth, stiring them up to prize it the more, and more to search after it. *There must be Heresies,* saith the Apostle, *that they that are approved may be made manifest* [q]. Open enemies and false brethren (by the wise ordering of God, who can make soveraign mithridate of the flesh of vipers) do always advantage the [r] Church.

And we do further trust, that when God, by his thus suffering the growth of abominable and pernicious Errours for a time, hath thereby fully accomplished the work he hath to do upon the hearts of his people, he that knows how to bring light out of darkness, order out of confusion, good out of evil, as he made the pride and tyranny of the Prelates the means to cast them forth, so also in much mercy to *England* wil at length, by this most unlikely and contrary means in it self, make the Reformation of these Kingdoms much more thorough and glorious.

[p] Eph. 3. 16.

[q] 1 Cor. 11 19

[r] *Non verum docendo quod nesciunt, sed ad verum quærendum carnales, ad verum apprehendum spirituales Catholicos excitando.* August. de vera relig. *tom.* 1. *cap.* 8.

III.

But before we pass on any further, we are here led to express with what astonishment and horrour we are struck when we seriously weigh what endeavours are used for the establishing of an universal Toleration of all the pernicious Errours, blasphemous and heretical doctrines broached in these times, as if men would not sin fast enough except they were biden; or as if God were not already enough dishonored except *the throne of iniqnity* were set up, *framing mischief by a Law* [s]; or as if men were afraid that

[s] Psa. 94. 20.

that Errour (a goodly plant to be cherished) would not grow fast enough except it were made much of; or as if it might as justly lay claim to the priviledg of being defended as truth it self; or as if there were danger that Satan would not destroy souls enough, except he might do the same without all restraint. For our own parts, as we can never sufficiently admire and wonder that any that have taken the Solemn League and Covenant, should either have so quickly forgoten it, or else imagine that the establishing a Toleration of Heresie and Schism by a Law, should be the way to extirpate them; so also here we shal take occasion to declare what our apprehensions are concerning such a Toleration.

We have searched the Scriptures, looked as impartially as we could into those authentick records, and yet we cannot find that ever such a thing was practised with approbation from God, from the time that *Adam* was created upon the earth unto the sealing up of the sacred volume, the ceasing of visions and all new divine revelations. But on the contrary, that those were blamed, reprehended and checked, that did but connive and wink at the practise of those things that were displeasing unto God [t]; that the not taking away the high places is mentioned to be a defect in their Reformation, of whom yet God himself gives testimony, that their hearts were upright [u]; and that those that quite took all away what ever was distasteful to him, were by God himself highly honored and much commended [w]: And therefore we cannot see how such a kind of Toleration as is endeavoured after in these times, can any ways consist with a thorough Reformation according to the Word of God, there being nothing more contrary to Reformation then Toleration.

t Rev. 2 14, 15, 20.

u 1 King. 15. 14. 2 Chro. 33. 17.

w 2 Chro 17. 6. & 31 1. & 34 3, 4.

Besides what else would this be but a seting up the *image of jealousie that provokes to jealousie* [x], and a puting upon God (who knows how many) corrivals.

x Ezek 8. 3.

It would be a giving Satan free liberty to set up his *thresholds by Gods thresholds, and his posts by Gods posts* [y], his Dagon by Gods Ark, which how dishonorable it would be to God and Jesus Christ his only Son, we leave all men to judg. They that search diligently cannot find in it love to God, or love to his Trueth, or love to mens precious souls; Nay, it strongly savours *of leaving of first love* [z], which Christ hates; of lukewarmness and want of zeal, for which Christ threatens *to spue out of his*

y Ezek 43. 8.

z Rev. 2 6.

mouth[a], of love to Errour, and an apprehenſion of ſome amiableneſs and worth therein for which it were to be deſired, or elſe why ſhould there be a pleading to have it tenderly dealt with and indulged? even as it argued a love to *Baal* in them that pleaded for him againſt *Gideon*, becauſe *he had caſt down his altar and cut down the grove that was by it*[b]. It would be no part of *Englands* thankfulneſs unto God, after ſo many deliverances and mercies received from him, to grant men open liberty to blaſpheme God at their pleaſure, *wreſt the Scriptures to their own deſtruction*[c], trample upon his holy ordinances, ſleight and contemn all miniſtry, deſpiſe his meſſengers, commit all maner of abomination, and for every one to go a whoring after his own inventions, which yet would be the effects of a lawleſs Toleration.

a Rev. 3. 16.

b Judg. 6. 30, 31

c 2 Pet. 3. 16.

Add yet further, that a Toleration would be the puting of a ſword into a mad mans hand[d]; a cup of poyſon into the hand of a child; a leting looſe of mad men with firebrands in their hands; an appointing a City of refuge in mens conſciences for the devil to fly to[e]; a laying of the ſtumbling block before the blind; a proclaiming liberty to the wolves to come into Chriſts fold to prey upon his lambs; a Toleration of ſoul-murther (the greateſt murther of all other,) and for the eſtabliſhing whereof, damned ſouls in hel would accurſe men on earth. Neither would it be to provide for tender conſciences, but to take away all conſcience; if evil be ſuffered it wil not ſuffer good; if Errour be not forcibly kept under, it wil be ſuperiour; which we here the rather ſpeak of, to undeceive thoſe weak ones, who under the ſpecious pretext of liberty of conſcience (though falſly ſo called, and being indeed, as is wel obſerved by the general Aſſembly of the Church of *Scotland*[f], *Liberty of Errour, Scandal,*

d If there were a company of mad men runing up and down the ſtreets with knives and ſwords in their hands endeavouring to miſchieve and kil, muſt we do nothing to reſtrain them? *Burroughs heart-diviſions*, pag. 24. *See more in him there to this purpoſe at large.*

e The devil muſt not be let alone though he get into mens conſciences, God hath appointed no City of refuge for him; if he flee to mens conſciences as *Joab* to the horns of the altar, he muſt be fetcht from thence, or ſain upon there; ſomething may be done to men to keep them from evil, and to reduce them notwithſtanding the plea of their conſciences. *Burroughs heart-diviſions*, pag. 29, 30. *See him there alſo more at large.*

f See the Declaration and Exhortation of the General Aſſembly of the Church of *Scotland* to their brethren in *England*, pag. 4.

Schiſm

Schiſm, Hereſie, diſhonoring God, oppoſing the Trueth, hindering Reformation, and ſeducing others) are charmed by Satan into a better liking of an unconſcientious Toleration. We alſo dread to think, what horrid blaſphemies would be belched out againſt God; what vile abominations would be commited; how the duties of neereſt relations would be violated; what differences and diviſions there would be in Families and Congregations, what heart-burnings would be cauſed; what diſobedience to the civil Magiſtrate that might be palliated over with a pretence of conſcience as wel as other opinions and practiſes; what diſturbance of the civil peace, and diſſolution of all humane ſociety *g*, and of all Government in the Church and Common wealth, if once Liberty were given by a Law (which God forbid) for men to profeſs and practice what opinions they pleaſed; yea, ſin would be then commited without any reſtraint or ſhame, although the more liberty to ſin the greater bondage. The eſtabliſhing of a Toleration, would make us become the abhoring and loathing of all Nations, and being ſo palpable a breach of our Covenant, would be the high road-way to lay *Englands* glory for ever in the duſt, and awaken againſt us the Lord of hoaſts to bring a ſword upon us *to avenge the quarrel of his Covenant* h. A Toleration added to our ſins would make us to God an intolerable burthen; he would doubtleſs think of eaſing himſelf, he would be weary of repenting. And when Jeſus Chriſt ſhould come to judg both quick and dead, the very lukewarm Prelates whom Chriſt hath ſpued out of his mouth (who in their times would never have conſented to ſuch a Toleration as is now deſired) would riſe up in judgment againſt us and condemn us. And therefore however there are ſome *i* that do conceive that in things of the mind the ſword is not put into the hands of the civil Magiſtrate for the terror of evil doers and the praiſe of them that do wel; Yet becauſe we judg the Toleration of all kind of opinions and profeſſions in matters of Faith (Errours therein

g Pertinax error in doctrina fidei diſſenſio et diſtractio totius ſocietatis humanæ perturbationem ſecum trahit, ejuſque tranquillitatem ſubvertit. Synopſis purior. theolog. diſp. 50. theſ 61.

h Lev. 26. 25.

i And from brethren, in things of the mind, we look for no compulſion, but that of light and reaſon: in other things God hath put the ſword in the Parliaments hands for the terror of evil doers, and the praiſe of them that do wel, *&c. See a Letter ſent to the Houſe of Commons and printed* 1645. *going under the name of* Oliver Cromwel *and ſet down by Mr* Rutherford *in his ſurvey of the ſpiritual Antichriſt*, page 250. *part* 1.

being in the number of those evil works to which the Magistrate is to be a terror *k*) to be impious and wicked, and would be a tender nurse to give suck to & cherish the foul, ugly, monstrous and miss-shapen births of our times, as it would be also destructive to the Common wealth, though we shal easily grant, men are not to be punished by the Magistrate for their internal opinions which they do not discover *l*, yet with our reverend brethren we do here profes to this Church, and to all the Churches of God throughout the whole world, *That we do detest the forementioned Toleration* m. And what ever others may expect to the contrary, yet we hope that God wil never suffer the Parliament of *England* ever to be so unmindful of either their solemn League and Covenant, or of their own former Declarations and Remonstrances n, Protestations and Professions, as once to give a listening ear to such as might move for such a thing; and that they might be kept from being guilty of so great a sin, shal be our earnest prayer for them unto God continually night and day.

k Rom. 13. 3, 4

l Iis tamen non adstipulamur qui sicuti, hominum cogitationes liberas esse ajunt, ita quorumlibet de fide opiniones a magistratu tolerandas esse arbitrantur; quamvis enim internas hominum opiniones non esse puniendas largiamur, impiam tamen ac reipublicæ exitialem religionis professionem a magistratu quibuslibet Civibus esse permittendam negamus. Synops. purior. theolog. disput. 50. thes 60.

m See a Testimony to the Trueth of Jesus Christ, *page* 34.

n *The honorable House of Commons do thus remonstrate*, They infuse into the people that we mean to abolish all Church Government, and leave everyman to his own fancy for the service and worship of God—— *And then afterwards they declare*; And we do here declare that it is far from our purpose and desire to let loose the golden reins of Discipline and Government in the Church, to leave private persons or particular Congregations to take up what form of divine service they please, for we hold it requisite that there should be throughout the whole Realm a conformity to that *order* which the Laws enjoyn, according to the Word of God. *See the Remonstrance of the State of the Kingdom* Decemb 15. 1641.

IV.

And thus having expressed our deepest sence concerning the Errours and Heresies of these times, and the Toleration of them, which to us is so hateful and abominable, we are now carryed on to declare what we conceive to be the cause of the spreading of our freting leprosie and eating gangrene.

If we make inquiry into our selves, we must needs acknowledg, our not prizing trueth as we ought, not improving precious opportunities

portunities for good that have been put into our hands, the great decay of the power of godlineſs, leaving firſt love, lukewarmneſs, ſleighting and undervaluing the means of grace, and barrenneſs under them, (faults, generally to be found in the better ſort of people) together with the many other grievous ſins that are commited in the Land, are juſt cauſes why we ſhould be ſcourged with ſuch a ſpiritual plague; but yet theſe hinder not but that we may alſo as truly number, the not ſettling a wel ordered Church Government for ſo long a time after the old rotten building was pulled down, amongſt the cauſes of the growth and ſpreading of pernicious Errours. Anarchy wil cauſe confuſion in the Church as wel as in the Common wealth. And therefore we do profeſs, that without a wel ordered Church Government, that we here may uſe the words of the general Aſſembly of the Church of *Scotland*[o], *We know no other proper and effectual remedy againſt the preſent dangers of Religion in this Kingdom, or for purging the Church from Scandals which are deſtructive either to ſound doctrine or godlineſs*; and are therefore thankful to the Parliament for ordaining of late, the ſpeedy diviſion of all the Counties of the Kingdom into Claſſical Presbyteries*: Diſcipline and Government in the Church being *the golden Reins* (whereunto this preſent Parliament hath wel likened it) ſerving to curb and reſtrain men, who are by nature *like a wilde aſſes colt*[p], affecting unbridled liberty; it is the rod wherewith to correct petulant and froward children; the ſhepherds crook which the faithful Paſtors cannot want, but to the ſpiritual prejudice of their flocks; the keyes opening the doors for the admitance in of thoſe whom Chriſt would have to be admited into his Church, and the ſhuting out of whom he would have kept out; it is the hedg or wal to keep the ravenous beaſts from entering into Gods garden and vineyard; the means to *take the foxes, the little foxes that ſpoil the vines*[q], and to purge out the *leaven* that otherwiſe, though but little, yet *would leaven the whole lump*[r]. And if not a little Family, no Common wealth or ſociety of men can conſiſt without

o See the Exhortation of the general Aſſembly of the Church of *Scotland*, page 12. where they uſe theſe expreſſions in reference to the Presbyterial Government, which we do alſo with them fully and freely own.

* See the Ordinance of *Parliament* for the ſpeedy dividing and ſettling the ſeveral Counties of this Kingdom into diſtinct Claſſical Presbyteries, and ordered to be printed *Jan.* 29. 1647.

p Iob 11. 12.

q Cant. 2 15.

r 1 Cor. 5. 6.

without the bond of Laws or Diſcipline[s], how can it be expected but want of Church Government wil ſoon bring the Church to ruine: Therefore ſeeing Government is ſo neceſſary for the Church, we cannot but judg, that the want of it, for ſo long a time, hath been and is one main cauſe of thoſe great evils with which this ſick and languiſhing Church is ſo much diſtempered. And as we are fully perſwaded, with the reverend and learned Aſſembly of Divines, from clear Scripture grounds [t] *That the Lord Jeſus as King and head of his Church hath therein appointed a Government in the hand of Church Officers diſtinct from the civil Magiſtrate* [u]; and that it is *he upon whoſe ſhoulders the government is ---- who ſits upon the throne of David and upon his Kingdom to order it and eſtabliſh it with judgment and juſtice from henceforth even for ever; having all power given to him in heaven and in earth by the Father who raiſed him from the dead and ſet him on his own right hand------ and put all things under his feet* [w]: So alſo with our reverend brethren the Miniſters of the Province of *London* [x] we are *wel aſſured* that Jeſus Chriſt hath *ſufficiently revealed in his Word how he wil have his Church governed now under the New Teſtament: and that the Preſbyterial Government (truly ſo called) by Preſbyteries and Synods in a due line of ſubordination of the leſſer to the greater (with proſperous ſucceſs exerciſed in the beſt reformed Churches,) is that Government which is moſt agreeable to the mind of Jeſus Chriſt revealed in Scripture.*

And if this Government were but fully eſtabliſhed and ſettled throughout this Kingdom, we do not doubt but through the bleſſing of God in the ſincere and faithful exerciſe thereof, the miſts that do at preſent overſhadow and obſcure this Church would

[s] *Si nulla ſocietas imo nulla domus quæ vel modicam familiam habeat contineri in recto ſtatu ſine diſciplina poteſt, eam eſſe multo magis neceſſariam in eccleſia cujus ſtatum quam ordinatiſſimum eſſe decet.* Calvin lib. 4. inſtit. cap. 12. ſect. 1. *Sicut nec familia nec reſpublica nec ulla humana ſocietas ſine legum & diſciplinæ vinculo conſiſtere poteſt, ita nec eccleſiæ Chriſti ſua integritas in hoc mundo poteſt conſtare, niſi certo regimini, atque idoneis legibus ſit adſtricta; per quæ ordo ejus & ἐυταξία adverſus carnis, mundi ſathanæ, fraudes ac militiones inviolatè conſervetur.* Synopſis purior. theolog. Diſp. 48. theſ. 1.

[t] Iſa 9. 6, 7. 1 Tim 5. 17. Acts 20 17, 28. Heb. 13. 7, 17, 24. 1 Cor. 12. 28. Mat. 28. 18, 19, 20.

[u] See the humble Advice of the Aſſembly of Divines concerning a Confeſſion of Faith, *ch.* 30. *ſect.* 1. page 52.

[w] See the humbly Advice of the Aſſembly concerning Church Government, page 3.

[x] See a Teſtimony to the Trueth of Jeſus Chriſt, page 24.

would be ſoon diſpelled; the Errours that do boldly walk up and down without controul, would not dare to peep forth; or if they did, would be ſoon ſuppreſſed; looſeneſs and profaneſs would be more reſtrained, the power of godlineſs more advanced, many ſcandals prevented and removed, ſundry ſtumbling blocks would be taken out of the way of the weak, to the healing of our diviſions; and ſo the Spouſe of Chriſt, that at preſent is black over, would look with another manner of face then now ſhe doth. The experience of the reformed Churches, and eſpecially of *Scotland*, confirms the ſucceſsfulneſs of this Government abundantly for the weeding up of Errours, and keeping the Church of Chriſt chaſte from being drawn aſide to commit ſpiritual fornication with the idols of the brain. We alſo our ſelves in the exerciſe of this Government, according to thoſe cautions and conſiderations premiſed by us ϟ, have to the praiſe and glory of God cauſe to acknowledg it in ſome meaſure ſucceſsful amongſt us in the exerciſe of that part thereof that is already ſettled, for the ſtirring up of the ignorant to endeavour after more knowledg, and the reſtraining of the ſcandalous; but much more fruit we apprehend would be reaped from it, if in all the parts thereof it were in its ful force eſtabliſhed. But in the mean time, we cannot but bewail that there are ſo many that are prejudiced againſt it, do aſperſe it, ſpeaking evil of what they underſtand not; and that ſundry do not only refuſe to ſubmit to it themſelves, but do with tooth and nail oppoſe and hinder the eſtabliſhing of it in the Kingdom. Here alſo we do further ſignifie, that we cannot only our ſelves ſubmit to what the reverend and learned Aſſembly of Divines have preſented to the Honorable Houſes of Parliament, as their humble advice concerning this Government (judging it to be very conſonant to the Word of God, and wel agreeing with the Government and Diſcipline of other reformed Churches;) but do alſo unfeignedly and heartily deſire in purſuance of our Covenant, that the three Kingdoms may be brought to that uniformity for Diſcipline and Government that is adviſed to there, not without much regreet diſapproving of the new-coined titles of diſtinction of a Scottiſh and Engliſh Presbytery.

ϟ See the deliberate Reſolution of the Miniſters of the Goſpel within the County Palatine of *Lancaſter*, with their grounds & cautions according to which they put into execution the Presbyterial Government upon the preſent Ordinances of Parliament, *Preſton*, *Novemb.* 17. 1646.

V.

As for our Solemn League and Covenant for the defence of our Religion, and to endeavour Reformation, we cannot but here cal to mind the manifold encouragements given us to take it, it being (when it was by authority preſſed upon us) *thought a fit and excellent means to acquire the favor of almighty God towards the three Kingdoms* [a]; *and for the better encouraging of all ſorts of perſons to take it*, was by the Parliament, in the tenth inſtruction for the taking of the Covenant, *recommended to the Aſſembly of Divines, to make a brief Declaration, by way of Exhortation, to all ſorts of perſons to take it, as that which they judged not only lawful, but (all things conſidered) exceeding expedient and neceſſary for all that wiſh wel to religion, the King and Kingdom, to joyn in, and to be a ſingular pledg of Gods gracious goodneſs to all the three Kingdoms*, and was accordingly urged by the Aſſembly, *as the ſoveraign and only means to recover an embroiled bleeding remnant* [b]: and yet further, that in the Declaration of both Kingdoms joyned in Arms, ordered to be printed *Jan.* 30. 1643. ſuch as would not take the Covenant are declared *to be publick enemies to their Religion & Country, and that they are to be cenſured & puniſhed as profeſſed adverſaries and Malignants*; all which, as they did lay ſtrong engagements on us to take it, ſo to ſee it ſo urged and preſſed, made our hearts within us to leap for joy. We remembred our ſervitude and bondage under the Prelatical Task-maſters, how the Doctrine, Diſcipline, and Worſhip had been corrupted, and this Covenant for Extirpation of Popery, Prelacy, Superſtition, Hereſie, Schiſm and Profaneſs, and for Reformation of Religion in Doctrine, Diſcipline, Government and Worſhip, not only recommended, but alſo commanded, and ſo ſtrongly preſſed by the higher powers to be taken throughout theſe three Kingdoms, did in the midſt of our troubles, at that time lying on us, mightily revive, and cheer our drooping ſpirits, and was as *life from the dead* [c]. We alſo ſhal never forget, how the taking of this Covenant was by our ſelves preſſed and urged on our ſeveral Congregations, how ſolemnly it was ſworn, and what rejoycing there was at the Oath, ſundry at the taking of it weeping for joy. And when the Covenant was thus taken, we thought within our ſelves that

[a] See the Ordinance of Parliament of *Febr.* 2. 1643. for the taking the Covenant.

[b] *See the Exhortation for the taking the Covenant, ordered by the Houſe of Commons to be printed Feb.* 9. 1643.

[c] Rom. 11. 15.

that furely now the Crown is ſet on *Englands* head; we judged the day of entering into this Covenant to be *Englands* Coronation day; as it was the day of the gladneſs of our hearts, and wherein God wiped away the reproach caſt upon us by Separatiſts before, for the want of an expreſs Covenant. We do alſo remember, how Copies of this Covenant were ſent abroad into neighboring reformed Churches, by whom as they were received with great joy, ſo doubtleſs then their expectations were raiſed, to ſee *England* ſhortly brought neerer unto them in a thorougher Reformation according to the Word of God, thoſe things being abjured which had been formerly as a partition-wal ſet up betwixt them and us. And let us never let ſlip out of our minds, how God from heaven ſmiled upon our Armies, from the firſt day of entering into this Covenant, until through the good hand of our God upon us for good, the whole power of the enemy was quite broke in pieces; and therefore if ſo ſoon as we have reaped ſuch fruit and benefit from it we caſt it away, who knows but we may be forced to take it up again to ſave our lives? And yet for all this, we wiſh we had not cauſe for to complain, that this Covenant thus ſtrongly urged, thus ſolemnly ſworn, thus bleſſed with ſucceſs, is contemned, ſleighted, moſt palpably broken, ſcorned and derided. Where an holy and religious Covenant, once made, is regarded as it ought, it wil be reverently ſpoken of, neither wil the earneſt and pathetical preſſing the not caſting it away, be any matter to quarrel or ſcoff at. And yet beſides ſundry other unſavory and reproachful expreſſions uſed, tending plainly to bring the Covenant into diſgrace (to ſay no worſe of them) [d] ſome there are that liken the earneſt and often preſſing of not laying aſide the Covenant to the practiſe *of the Papiſts holding up the idolatrous Eucharist in the eyes of the people that they may fall down and worſhip it.* The Covenant binds to endeavour Reformation according

[d] The firſt thing you complain of under the head of omiſſion *is no leſs then the Solemn League and Covenant*, and here you do abound with your pathetick interrogations, to affect the hearts of thoſe whoſe eyes are in their bowels, whoſe underſtandings are drowned & ſwallowed up in their paſſions after this manner. And *ſhal the Covenant, which is as ſolemn a Vow which creatures on earth can make to God in heaven &c.* And again, *ſhall the Covenant for the preſervation &c.* And again (like the Papiſts which hold up their idolatrous Eucharist in the eyes of the people, that they may fall down to worſhip it) *ſhal the Covenant which both Houſes recommended to the Aſſembly of &c.* Yet again (as if here lay all your bait to catch gudgeons) *ſhal our mutual & ſolemn League and Covenant ſubſcribed by the Parliaments of both Kingdoms &c.* Once more yet (for if this ſpring fails all our ſport wil be loſt), *ſhal the Covenant even with thoſe that took it be already out of date? &c.* Scottiſh miſt diſpeld, *page* 22.

cording to the Word of God, and to bring the Churches in theſe Kingdoms to neereſt uniformity in matters of Religion; and yet the earneſt preſſing uniformity, according to the Covenant, is made by ſome [e], a ſubſtituting *the Solemn League and Covenant in the room of the Oracles of Heaven, aſetting up of mans poſts, the Covenant, by Gods poſts, the holy Scriptures; and is compared to the Jew having his Talmud, the Turk his Alcharon, the Papiſt his Maſs-Book, the Prelate his Service-Book*; which kind of expreſſions and compariſons, as we cannot but with greateſt indignation deteſt and abhor, ſo in that they ſet the Covenant (that makes the Word of God the rule of all Reformation and Uniformity that is ſworn to there) at hoſtile oppoſition with the Word of God, it is very evident to what purpoſe they tend, *ſc.* that the covenanted Uniformity in matters of Religion ſhould not be inſiſted on or urged, for that *Were to ſet up mans poſts, the Covenant, by Gods poſts, the holy Scriptures, and were to be like the Jew having his Talmud, the Turk his Alcharon, the Papiſt his Maſſ-book, &c.* and therefore the concluſion is, *better it is that this brazen ſerpent ſhould be broken to pieces and ground to powder, then that men ſhould fall down and worſhip it, though formerly an healing benefit was received from it.* Are not theſe plain evidences in what mean account the Covenant is with ſome perſons, when the earneſt preſſing the not laying it aſide is ſo ſcorned and flouted at, and when the urging of covenanted Uniformity wil not be endured? And is not this Covenant alſo moſt palpably broken, when not only Uniformity is cryed out againſt, but a Toleration of all kind of Errours, Hereſies and Schiſms, in ſtead of endeavours to extirpate them, is earneſtly purſued by divers? to ſay nothing of the great increaſe of Errours of all kinds, the woful diviſions and rents in the Church (which never were more or greater then ſince the Covenant was taken) nor of

e But ſecondly, why do you make *the ſolemn League and Covenant*, the *unicum neceſſarium*, the ballance of your ſanctuary, and the golden reed to meaſure your temple; you have not a tittle of *the word of God*; but all your cry is *the ſolemn League and Covenant*, in ſtead of the Word of God; the *Jew* hath his Talmud, the *Turk* his Alcharon, the *Papiſt* his Maſſ-book, the *Prelate* his Service-book, and muſt we have the ſolemn League and Covenant in ſtead of the Oracles of Heaven, the Word of God? Better it is that this brazen ſerpent ſhould be broken to pieces and ground to powder, then that men ſhould fall down and worſhip it; It was the hypocritical Phariſees pretending to heaven, though minding the earth, who making voyd the Law of God did teach for doctrines the tradition of the Elders; let us not put up mans poſts, the Covenant, by Gods poſts, the holy Scriptures. *Scottiſh miſt diſpell'd*, page 26, 27.

of the abominable looſeneſs and profaneſs of the times; which certainly is not *for to amend our lives, and each one to go before another in the example of a real Reformation*, according as was profeſſed and promiſed.

For theſe things we ſee cauſe to hang down our heads and bluſh, and that our eyes ſhould run down with tears continually, as our hearts at the conſideration hereof may be aſtoniſhed and ſwallowed up with grief; Oh what diſhonor is hereby brought to God! What ſcandal given to Religion! What matter of reproach and ſcorn is this like to be unto us from our common enemy! What an unparalell'd blot is hereby laid upon this Church and Nation, never like to be waſhed out in this Age nor in the Age of our children after us! and what danger of ſwift deſtruction, if there be not repentance in time! May not the Lord complain of us, as once he did of *Iſrael, When he ſlew them, then they ſought him, and they returned & inquired early after God; & they remembred that God was their rock, and the high God their Redeemer; nevertheleſs they did flatter him with their mouth, and they lyed unto him with their tongues, for their heart was not right with him, neither were they ſtedfaſt in his Covenant:* And may it not be ſaid of us, as in the days of *Joſiah* it was ſaid concerning treacherous *Judah* that had made *a ſolemn Covenant with God for Reformation* [g], that ſhe *turned not to God with her whole heart, but feignedly* [h]. And beſides all this, neighbor Churches take notice of our ſtrange breach of Covenant, and are amazed at it. Our dear brethren of *Scotland*, who upon our taking this Covenant were induced to embark themſelves with us, and run a common hazard in the ſame cauſe, do ſadly complain [i] of *the crying ſin of breach of Covenant ----- and that the ſtaves of beauty and bands, covenant and brotherhood are broken by many in this Kingdom*, and are much caſt down in themſelves and grieved, fearing leſt they ſhould loſe the fruit of all their ſufferings and hazards for our ſakes, *ſc.* the eſtabliſhment of Reformation and Uniformity in Religion in theſe three Kingdoms according to the Word of God, and example of the beſt reformed Churches; and which, notwithſtanding all ſuggeſtions whatſoever to the contrary, we dare neither be ſo injurious nor uncharitable towards them, as not to judg was the main end by them propoſed when they firſt engaged with us; eſpecially when we conſider *Whence came the*

[f] Pſa. 78.34, 35,36,37.

[g] 2. Chron. 34. 31,32

[h] Ier. 3.6,10.

[i] *See the Exhortation of the general Aſſembly of the church of Scotland to their brethren in England*, page 5,6,7.

firſt ſtirrings of the wheels of Chriſts chariot in great Britain of latter times, *and who it was that firſt ſounded the retreat to return from Babylon, which poſterity wil know to the ſecond coming of Jeſus Chriſt*, thoughwe ſhould not own it, of which we are modeſtly put in remembrance by one *k* whoſe name is famous throughout the Churches whileſt he is alive, and whoſe works will abundantly commend him to poſterity when he is dead. The things that have been already mentioned in reference to breach of Covenant, are matter of deepeſt ſorrow to our hearts, eſpecially if we do further conſider what guilt of perjury *l*, ſpiritual adultery *m*, high treaſon againſt the God of heaven is hereby brought upon our Land; and that alſo breach of Covenant is a thing which God complains of *n*, threatens ſeverely *o*, and for which he hath inflicted ſore Judgments on his people in former times *p*. As for our ſelves, though we cannot excuſe our ſelves from failings againſt our Covenant, for which we deſire unfeignedly to be humbled, yet conſidering that for the matter of it, there is nothing in it to be repented of, but that the ſeed of Reformation and the foundation of the houſe of the Lord is in it, and knowing alſo how ſolemnly, with hands lifted up to the moſt high God, it was taken, and that it was made with the Almighty who will not be mocked, and in his preſence *Who is the ſearcher of all hearts, with a true intention to perform the ſame as we ſhal anſwer at the great day when the ſecrets of all hearts ſhal be diſcloſed*; we do therefore by the grace of God reſolve, that we will not *ſuffer our ſelves either directly or indirectly, by whatſoever combination, perſwaſion or terror to be ever withdrawn*, either in whole or in part, *from this ſacred League and Covenant*, that was ſo ſolemnly and cheerfully ſworn by us, in the time of *Englands* low eſtate and ſad hour of temptation, *but ſhall, all the days of our lives, zealouſly and conſtantly continue therein againſt all oppoſition, and promote the ſame according to our power, againſt all lets and impediments whatſoever*, being fully aſſured there is none on earth that hath that power over our conſciences, as to diſcharge us at their pleaſure, from the bond of this ſacred Oath; and that therefore the parties engaged in it, what ever ſome mens intentions might be when they took it, and how ever the common enemy (whoſe preva-

k Mr *Rutherford* in his ſurvey of the ſpiritual Antichriſt, in the Epiſtle to the Reader *page 6.*

l Neh. 10.29.
m Jer. 50.5.
n Pſa 78.10.37 2 King. 17. 15 Jer. 11.10
o Lev. 26. 25. Deut. 29. 20, 21, 22, to 25. Jer. 22. 8, 9.
p 2 King. 6. 7, 15.

prevalency and power, together with our low condition in this land before, did first occasion the entring into it) be now suppressed, are notwithstanding still as firmly bound to their utmost to endeavour, according to their places, the performance of all the several things therein contained and sworn, (and that yet have not received their accomplishment because the war is ended) as at the first taking of it. And therefore, though we cannot but heartily lament, that any should be so strangely deluded as to q conceive so much, yet we do abhor that it should be so much as once imagined, that when the common enimy is suppressed, this Covenant then forthwith should be out of date, and but *like an Almanack of the last year, shewing us rather What we have already done, then What we be now to do.* And because, as when it was first enjoyned to be taken, it was thought a fit means to acquire the favour of God; so we now are fully perswaded being kept and observed, it would make *England* the delight of God, the re oycing of al true hearted Saints at home and abroad, a corasive and vexation to the Devil, Antichrist, all Popish prophane and Malignant persons at home and abroad, and a mirrour of incomparable mercy. We shal therfore (as by the Order r of the Honourable the House of Commons, we are appointed to read it every Fast day) in our places, by stirring up our several Congregations, to be always mindful of it to our uttermost endeavour, that they may observe and keep it, not expecting the blessing of God any longer on these Kingdoms, then in the remembrance of it, and adherence to it. And as with the Reverend Assembly of Divines, *f* we are assured, *that an oath is to be taken in the plain and common sence of the words without equivocation, or mental reservation*, adjudging the contrary

q First, I do not conceive the parties to that League intended thereby to be everlastingly bound each to other; the grounds of striking it, being meerly occasional for the joyning in a war to suppress the common enemy, accordingly we did joyn; the enemy is (if we be wise) suppressed, and the war (as you see) ended, what should the Covenant do, but like an Almanack of the last year, shew us rather what we have already done, then what we be now to do. *See the Independency of England endeavoured to be maintained by Henry Marten, a Member of the Parliament there, &c.* page 11.

r *Die veneris, Jan.* 29. 1644. Ordered by the Commons Assembled in Parliament, that the Solemn League and Covenant be on every day of Fast and publique humiliation, publiquely read in every Church and Congregation within this Kingdom, and that every Congregation be enjoyned to have one of the said Covenants fairly printed in a fair letter, in a table fitted to hang up in some publique place of the Church, to be read.

f See the humble Advice of the Assembly of Divines concerning a Confession of Faith. Chap. 22. Sect. 4. page 40.

contrary opinion to lay a certain foundation for the eluding all oaths, as such a *salvo* as this, that the Covenant may be taken in mens own sence, hath given occasion to some to except against the taking of it [t]; so what ever any others may conceive to the contrary, with our Reverend Brethren, the Ministers of the Province of *London* [u], we do firmly beleeve, *That neither this nor any other oath is otherwise to be interpreted, then according to the common, plain and true grammatical sence of it*; accounting it a most absurd and wicked perverting of it, when it is so interpreted, as to engage, to defend and maintain any kind of Religion whatsoever, without any inquiry at all how orthodox it is, if *established by them who have all the authority that is visible to choose for themselves*, (which is the construction that is put upon it by some that profess to have taken [w] it;) God having never given such an absolute power to any men on earth, to establish what religion they please, and to require from any sort of persons in any Kingdom whatsoever, (who are all to render an account to God for themselves) that they should maintain and defend it upon such establishment, without any inquiry at all, whether it be according to the Word of God or no; as also, because the Covenant according to this interpretation might be made the bond of iniquity, to maintain & defend such Religions as are flat contrary to the Word of God, as *Judaism*, *Turcism*, and even *Paganism*, yea *Popery* it self, although by Covenant we be expresly bound to endeavour to extirpate it; *if established by them who have all the authority that is visible to choose for themselves.*

And therefore, we are sure this can be

[t] See the Reasons of the present judgment of the University of *Oxford* concerning the Covenant, &c. page 22. 23.

[u] See a Testimony to the Truth of Jesus Christ. page 28.

[w] Secondly, what would it do were it renewed and made perpetuall? thus much it saith in my opinion and no more; whensoever you shall be violently hindred in the execution of that Religion you had amongst you at the time of the engagement, and shal require our assistance, we must afford it you for the removall of that violence. In like manner when we shal be hindred in the exercise of that Religion which we according to the Covenant shall establish here, upon request to you made for that effect, you are tyed to assist us. And so throughout all the other clauses respectively and equally, carrying this along with you, we are hereby obliged to the reciprocall defence of one another, according to the declaration of the party wronged in any of the particulars there compriled, without being cavilled at, or scrupled by the party invoked, whether your Religion be the same it was, or ours the same it should be; whether the bounds of your liberties or ours be not enlarged beyond their then-line, whether your delinquents or ours be justly so or no, for the native Rights of both peoples being the principal, if not the only thing, we looked on when we swore; we do not keep our oath in pre-

be none of thoſe *native rights* of the people of any of theſe Kingdoms, which *we looked on when we ſware*, and which by this Oath or Covenant we are obliged to preſerve.

Thus, fearing leſt if we had *altogether held our peace at this time* [x], God might have ſufficiently vindicated his truth by other inſtruments, but for our baſeneſs judged us unworthy to be intruſted any longer with ſo precious a treaſure as trueth is; we have therefore choſen rather to approve our ſelves faithful to God, by joyning hands with our brethren (who have witneſſed ſuch a good confeſſion in giving ſuch a publike and open Teſtimony to *the trueth of Jeſus Chriſt*; *to our Solemn League and Covenant*; *and againſt the Errours, Hereſies, and Blaſphemies of theſe times*; *and the Toleration of them*;) though for ſo doing we ſhould be never ſo much perſecuted by men: then by our ſinful ſilence ſeem to be aſhamed either of Chriſt, his Trueth, or faithful ſervants, boldly ſtanding up in the cauſe of our great maſter, although thereby we might be aſſured to gain the whole world. And now having diſcharged our conſciences, how ever our actions may be miſconſtrued by ſome, yet we knowing our witneſs is in heaven, and that God is the righteous judg; we do not doubt but the teſtimony of our conſciences, (that herein we have aimed at nothing but the glory of God, the defence of his Trueth, the health and recovery of this bleeding Church, the caſting ſome diſcountenance upon the raging Errours of theſe times, and to teſtifie our adherence to our Solemn League and Covenant,) wil abundantly ſupport us, againſt the worſt of evils that can befal us for witneſs-bearing to the Trueth.

preſerving thoſe rights, if we do not allow this maſter-right to each ſeveral people, namely to be ſole judges within themſelvs, what religion they wil ſet up, what kind of laws they will have, what ſize, what number of Magiſtrates they hold fit to execute thoſe laws, and what offendors to be tryed by them. Hereupon, you know, we did not enquire at all how orthodox your religion was before we vowed to maintain you in it, that is in the quiet poſſeſſion of it, (not in the theological trueth of it, a buſineſs for an Univerſity perhaps, not for a Kingdom) being well aſſured it was eſtabliſhed by them who had all the authority that is viſible to chuſe for themſelves, and could not without apparent breach of order, and injury to fundamentals be diſturbed in the exerciſe of what they had ſo choſen. *See the Independency of England endeavoured to be maintained by* Henry Marten *a Member of the Parliament there*, &c. page 11, 12.

x Eſther 4. 14.

Subſcribed the 3d of *March* 1647. by us.

Richard Heyrick Warden of *Chriſt-*
D *Colledg*

Colledg in *Manchester.*

Richard Hollinworth Fellow of *Christ-Colledg* in *Manchester.*

Alexander Horrocks Minister of the Gospel at *Deane.*

John Tilsley Pastor of *Dean.*

John Harper Pastor of *Bolton.*

Richard Goodwin Minister of the Gospel at *Bolton.*

Richard Benson Minister of *Chollerton.*

William Alt Min. of *Bury.*

Robert Bath Pastor of *Rachdal.*

William Asheton Pastor of *Midleton.*

John Harrison Pastor of *Ashton-under-line.*

Thomas Pyke Pastor of *Radcliff.*

John Angier Pastor of *Denton.*

William Walker Minister of the Gospel at *Newton-heath* Chappel.

Toby Furnesse Min. of the Gospel.

John Joanes Min. of *Eccles.*

Edward

Edward Woolmer Min. of *Flixton.*
Robert Gilbody Preacher at *Holcome.*
Jonathan Scholefield Min. at *Heywood.*
Thomas Holland Min. of *Ringley.*
Thomas Clayton Min. of *Diasbury.*
Robert Conſtantine Min. of *Ouldham.*
Peter Bradſhaw Min. of *Cookey.*
John Brierley Preacher at *Salford.*
Thomas Johnſon Min. *of* the Goſpel at *Halſal.*
William Bell Paſtor of *Hyton.*
William Dun Min. of the Goſpel at *Ormeskirk.*
James Worrall Paſtor *of Aughton.*
William Aſpinwal Preacher of Gods Word at *Mayhall.*
John Mallinſon Min. of Gods Word at *Melling.*
Robert Seddon Min. of Gods Word at *Alker.*
Will. Norcot Miniſter *of Weſt-Derby.*

Will. Ward Min. of the Goſpel at *VValton.*

Nevil Kay Paſtor at *VValton.*

Henry Boulton Preacher at *Hale.*

John Fogge Paſtor *of Liverpoole.*

Joſeph Tompſon Min. *of Sephton.*

Jo. Kyd Min. of *Much-Crosby.*

James Bradſhaw Paſtor of the Church at *Wigan.*

James Starkey Paſtor of *North-meoles.*

James Wood Preacher of the VVord at *Aſßheton* in *Makerfield.*

Robert Yates Paſtor of the Church at *Warrington.*

Bradley Hayhurſt Preacher of the VVord at *Leigh.*

Thomas Norman paſtor of *Newton.*

Timothy Smith preacher of the VVord at *Rainforth.*

John Wright paſtor of *Billinge.*

Henry Shaw paſtor at *Holland.*

Thomas Crompton Min. of the Goſpel at *Aſtley.*

William

William Bagaley Min. of the Goſpel at *Burtonwood.*

William Leigh preacher of the *Word* at *Newchurch.*

Richard Mawdeſley paſtor of *Ellins.*

James Hyet paſtor of *Croſton.*

Thomas Cranage paſtor of *Brindle.*

Edward Gee Miniſter of the Goſpel at *Eccleſton.*

Paul Latham paſtor of *Standiſh.*

Samuel Joanes paſtor of *Hoole.*

Henry Welch Min. at *Chorley.*

Wil Brownſword preacher at *Dugglas.*

James Crichley preacher at *Penwortham.*

Edward Fleetwood paſtor at *Kirkham.*

Iſaac Ambroſe paſtor of *Preſton.*

William Addiſon Lecturer at *Preſton.*

William Ingham miniſt at *Gooſenarghe.*

Matthew Moore miniſter at *Broughton.*

Chriſtopher Edmundſon paſtor at *Garſtang.*

Thomas

Thomas Smith preacher at *Garſtang* Chappel.
John Breres miniſter at *Padiam.*
Richard Jackſon paſtor at *Whittington.*
Nicolas Smith paſtor of *Tatham.*
Robert Shaw paſtor at *Cockeram.*
James Scholecroft miniſter at *Caton.*
Thomas Whitehead paſtor at *Halton.*
Peter Atkinſon miniſter of *Ellel.*
John Faques miniſter of *Bolton.*
Richard VValker miniſter of *VVarton.*
Philip Bennet miniſter of *Ulverſton.*
VVilliam Smith miniſter of *over-Kellet.*
Brian VVillan Miniſter of *Coulton.*
Peter Smith miniſter of *Shireſhead.*
Edward Aſton miniſter of *Claughton.*
Thomas Demy miniſter of *VVireſdalle.*
Thomas Fawcet miniſter at *Overton.*
VVill. Garner Preacher of the Goſpel.
John Smith Miniſter of *Melling.*

Errata. Page 4. line 10. for *accurſed* read *condemned.*

FINIS.